

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION ROUND-UP: DECEMBER 17

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SUMMARY: COMING INTO THE FINAL STRETCH OF THE ELECTORAL RACE, THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE INTENSIFYING THEIR CAMPAIGNS TO EXPLOIT THEIR COMPETITORS' WEAKNESSES AND EMPHASIZE THEIR OWN PARTY'S MOST ATTRACTIVE PROGRAMS. THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY (IP) PROMISED TO MAKE SOME SPECTACULAR ANNOUNCEMENTS OVER THE WEEKEND. THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) LEADERSHIP WAS CONFIDENT OF VICTORY AND ASKED THE PUBLIC TO RESPECT THE DECEMBER 20 OUTCOME. THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) SAID IT WOULD CONCENTRATE ITS FINAL EFFORT ON TV AND WOULD "SPRING SOME SURPRISES." ALL THE MAJOR PARTIES EXPERIENCED SOME DIFFICULTIES. RAMGOOLAM WAS JERRED AT IN RODRIGUES DURING A CAMPAIGN VISIT. THE MMM WAS SMARTING AS THE ERRATIC RAM PYNDIAH CONTINUED TO MAKE HEADLINES WITH EMBARRASSING STATEMENTS AND CHARGES. AND THE PMSD WAS ATTACKED BY A MUSLIM NEWSPAPER FOR ITS ACCUSATION THE THE LIBYAN CHARGE' CONTRIBUTED "MILLIONS" TO THE COMMUNISTS. A NUMBER OF
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POLLS INDICATED THAT THE RACE WOULD BE CLOSE, ESPECIALLY

IN QUATRE BORNES WHERE THE MMM'S BERENGER IS RUNNING. AS THE HEATED CAMPAIGN NEARS ITS END, RAMGOOLAM ISSUED A CALL TO OTHER PARTY LEADERS T ASSURE THAT ORDER AND DISCIPLINE ARE MAINTAINED BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

END SUMMARY

1. COMING INTO THE FINAL STRETCH OF THE ELECTORAL RACE, THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE INTENSIFYING THE CAMPAIGN BY PROBING AND EXPLOITING THEIR COMPETITORS' WEAKNESSES, AND EMPHASIZING THEIR OWN PARTY'S MOST APPEALING PROMISES. THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY (IP) HELD A MEETING OF ALL OF ITS CANDIDATES ON DECEMBER 15 AT WHICH THEY WERE INSTRUCTED TO CONCENTRATE IN THEIR COMPAGNING ON THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN VARIOUS DOMAINS TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY FURTHER. RAMGOOLAM, OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE OUTCOME, TOLD THE CANDIDATES TO AVOID RESPONDING TO THE "CAMPAIGN OF SYSTEMATIC DENIGRATION" USED BY THEIR OPPONENTS. THE PARTY WILL HOLD A BIG NATIONAL RALLY IN QUATRE BORNES, BERENGER'S DISTRICT, ON DECEMBER 17, TO GIVE THE "COUP DE GRACE" TO ITS ADVERSARIES. RAMGOOLAM PROMISED TO "EXPLODE TWO THEREMONUCLEAR BOMBS" ON SATURDAY, 18 DECEMBER, AND THERE ARE RUMORS THAT THE IP WILL REVEAL SOMETHING "CATAclySMIC" AGAINST ANOTHER PARTY ON TV THAT SAME DAY. AGRICULTURE MINISTER BOOLELL, SPEAKING DECEMBER 15 ON TV FOR THE IP, REMINDED LISTENERS THAT THE PROSPERITY OF MAURITIUS DEPENDS ON SUGAR. THE LABOR GOVERNMENT OBTAINED A GOOD AND GUARANTEED PRICE FROM THE COMMON MARKET AND COULD DO SO AGAIN IN THE FUTURE. HE IMPLIED THAT A GOVERNMENT OF ANY OTHER PARTY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO SO, WITH OBVIOUS ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES.

2. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) LEADERSHIP ON THE SAME DAY, PARTY PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH EXPRESSED COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN A MMM VICTORY, CALLED ON ALL PARTIES TO RESPECT THE OUTCOME ON DECEMBER 20, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND APPEALED FOR ORDER, DISCIPLINE AND MODERATION BY EVERYONE. HE ASKED MMM MILITANTS NOT TO ENGAGE IN ACTS OF VIOLENCE OR REVENGE IF THE MMM WINS AND WARNED THE "RIGHT" AGAINST TRYING TO OVERTURN THE VERDICT OF THE PEOPLE. HE ENGAGED IN A BIT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE BY TELLING THE PRESS THAT HE HAD CALLED ON THE GOVERNOR GENERAL TO DISCUSS THE MODALITIES OF HIS TAKING OVER AS PRIME MINISTER FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS. MMM VICE PRESIDENT BHAYANT DENOUNCED THE IP'S ELECTORAL "MANEUVER" OF PROMISING ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS TO GIVE FREE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS. SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER CALIMED THERE HAS BEEN A MOVEMENT TOWARD THE MMM BY THE MIDDLE CLASS, FUNCTIONARIES, SMALL PLANTERS, AND EVERYONE WHO IS NOT PART OF THE PROPRIETED CLASS. HE SAID THERE IS A PANIC AMONG THE WHITES, WHOSE SUPPORT OF THE PMSD ONLY CONFIRMS THAT THAT IS THE PARTY OF THE CAPITALISTS. MMM SHADOE FOREIGN MINISTER DE L'ESTRAC DENOUNCED THE IP FOR MONOPOLIZING THE TV ON ELECTION EVE, THE POLICE FOR DISPLAYING AN ANTI-MMM ATTITUDE,

AND THE "TRADITIONAL POLITICIANS" FOR STIRRING UP COMMUNAL ANIMOSITIES BY USING RACIST SLOGANS. EARLIER, MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH ATTACKED THE PMSD AND THE IP ON TV AS BEING THE DEFENDERS OF THE CAPITALISTS. HE SAID RAMGOOLAM IS "SICK" AND THE LABOR PARTY IS SPLIT INTO SEVERAL FACTIONS, SO A VOTE FOR LABOR IS A VOTE FOR BOOLELL-DUVAL COALITION.

3. THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) LEADERS, IN SEARCHING FOR NEW WAYS TO APPEAL TO THE ELECTORATE, DECIDED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE USE OF TV THE LAST THREE DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN, AND THEY PROMISE TO SPRING SOME SURPRISES, INCLUDING A SPEECH ON BEHALF OF THE PMSD BY AN "UNEXPECTED PERSONALITY," WHO WILL DELIVER THE "COUP DE GRACE" TO THE MMM. THE PARTY IS PLANNING A "MONSTER RALLY" AT ROSE HILL ON SATURDAY, AT WHICH PMSD SUPPORTERS WHO WERE BEATEN UP BY MMM PARTISANS WILL BE DISPLAYED. DUVAL RENEWED A PROMISE HE MADE IN 1967 TO THE OCCUPANTS OF CENTRAL HOUSING AUTHORITY HOUSES THAT THEY WILL BE GIVEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR HOUSES FREE (THEY NOW PAY A SMALL RENT) IF THE PMSD WINS. THE PMSD ALSO GAINED SOME GROUND WHEN THE LEADERS OF THE "MARATHA LIBERATION MOVEMENT" CALLED ON MARATHIS TO VOTE PMSD BECAUSE IT HAS FOUR MARATHIS RUNNING.

4. IN A SIMILAR DEVELOPMENT THE IP RECEIVED A BOOST IN RAMGOOLAM'S TRIOLET DISTRICT WHEN A TOTAL OF EIGHT INDEPENDENT HINDU CANDIDATES WITHDREW IN FAVOR OF THE IP. IN A CONCERTED CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE THE WITHDRAWAL OF INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES, THE IP SUCCEEDED IN GETTING A SOCIALIST PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PSP) CANDIDATE TO DROP OUT IN FAVOR OF THE IP. SEVEN OF HAWOLDAR'S PSP CANDIDATES HAVE QUIT THE RACE SINCE NOMINATION DAY.

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5. HAWOLDAR IS STILL IN THE FRAY, HOWEVER. ON DECEMBER 14 HE CHOSE TO WASH THE LABOR PARTY'S DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC IN HIS TV BROADCAST FOR THE PSP. HAWOLDAR PRAISED RAMGOOLAM FOR HAVING DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO STRUGGLING FOR THE WORKERS, AND HE SAID ONLY HIS PSP AND THE LABOR PARTY ARE WORTH SUPPORTING (HE MILDLY CRITICIZED THE MMM). HAWOLDAR SAID THE LABOR PARTY IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR GROUPS WHO ARE WAGING AN INTERNECINE STRUGGLE OVER THE SUCCESSION TO RAMGOOLAM AND ARE DESTROYING THE PARTY IN THE PROCESS.

6. IN THE SAME EVENING'S TV POLITICAL BROADCAST HOUR, MRS. POONOOSAMY, MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, WHO IS CAMPAIGNING AS AN IP CANDIDATE IN THE NORTH, DID BADLY BECAUSE SHE SPEAKS CREOLE SO POORLY. (SHE WAS BORN AND GREW UP IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND CAME HERE AFTER MARRYING A MAURITIAN.)

7. THE SAME DAY RAMGOOLAM, WALTER, AND JAGATSINGH, WHILE CAMPAIGNING FOR THE IP CANDIDATES ON RODRIGUES, WERE JEERED AND HOOTED BY SUPPORTERS OF EX-PRIEST SERGE CLAIR OF THE ORGANIZATION OF RODRIGUAN PEOPLE, WHO APPEARS TO BE DOING WELL ON THE ISLAND, A TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLD OF DUVAL'S PMSD.

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8. BUT THE IP WAS NOT ALONE IN EXPERIENCING SOME DIFFICULTIES. THE MMM'S RAM PYNDIAH CONTINUED TO MAKE HEADLINES WITH HIS HIGHLY ERRATIC BEHAVIOR. HE REVEALED TO THE PRESS THAT HE HAS DEMANDED FROM LE MILITANT, THE MMM PARTY NEWSPAPER, REPAYMENT OF A LOAN OF 40,000 RUPEES HE MADE TO IT WHEN IT WAS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY. FINDING HIMSELF IN FINANCIAL STRAITS NOW, WITH HIS HOUSE ABOUT TO BE SEIZED, HE NEEDS THE MONEY BACK. IF THE PAPER REFUSES TO PAY UP PYNDIAH SAYS HE WILL SUE IN COURT. HE ADMITTED HIS ACTION WOULD CAUSE A CERTAIN "UNREST" IN THE MMM BUT HE REMAINS FAITHFUL TO THE PARTY. THOUGH NOT A MEMBER OF THE MMM, HE INTENDS TO PURSUE HIS CANDIDACY UNDER IT BANNER. (COMMENT: IF IT IS TRUE THAT PYNDIAH HAS NOT SOUGHT A PSYCHIATRIST'S HELP, PERHAPS HE SHOULD CONSIDER DOING SO.)

9. THE PMSD ALSO CAME UNDER ATTACK WHEN THE MUSLIM PAPER, THE STAR, CHARGED THE PMSD'S PAPER, LE POPULAIRE, WITH HAVING TRIED TO DISTRUB MAURITIUS' RELATIONS WITH LIBYA BY PUBLISHING THE ACCUSATION THAT THE LIBYAN CHARGE' WAS INTERCEPTED AT PLAISANCE AIRPORT WITH HIS DIPLOMATIC POUCH CONTAINING "MILLIONS" DESTINED FOR THE COMMUNISTS (THE MMM). THE STAR SAYS THE LIBYAN CHARGE' HAS NOT BEEN IN MAURITIUS SINCE NOVEMBER 19.

10. FOR POLL WATCHERS, THE CONSERVATIVE LE CERNEEN, WHICH SUPPORTS THE PMSD, CAME FORWARD WITH ITS OWN TO DISPUTE EARLIER POLLS TAKEN BY WEEK-END (REF B). LE CERNEEN PUBLISHED THE RESULTS OF POLLS IN THREE DISTRICTS CONDUCTED BY ANOTHER NEW ORGANIZATION, THE "INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLING" (ISOP). THIS POLL (MADE ON DECEMBER 4) SHOWED THE PMSD WINNING THE QUATRE BORNES DISTRICT (WHERE

THE MMM LEADER, BERENGER, IS RUNNING) BY ABOUT THE SAME MARGIN GIVEN BY THE WEEK-END POLL. THE ISOP POLL GAVE THE PMSD 43 PERCENT, THE MMM 25 PERCENT, THE IP 22 PERCENT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE UDM 4 PERCENT, AND UNDECIDED 6 PERCENT. HOWEVER, AN ISOP POLL THE SAME DAY IN DISTRICT NUMBER 4, WHERE DUVAL IS RUNNING, SHOWED THE IP WINNING BY A HAIR WITH 30 PERCENT, AGAINST 29 PERCENT FOR THE PMSD, 25 PERCENT FOR THE MMM, AND 16 PERCENT UNDECIDED. WEEK-END'S POLL OF NUMBER 4 HAD THE MMM WINNING WITH A GOOD MARGIN OVER THE IP. ISOP'S RESULTS IN A THIRD POLL, IN GHE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF SOUILLAC, HAD THE SAME WINNER AS L'EXPRESS'S POLL IN THAT DISTRICT, THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY, BUT WITH A MARGIN 9 PERCENT SMALLER. WEEK-END'S POLL CLAIMED THIS DISTRICT IS "VERY CLOSE." AS LE CERNEEN COMMENTED: "THERE ARE POLLS AND THERE ARE POLLS." LE CERNEEN PUBLISHED STILL ANOTHER POLL ON DECEMBER 17 TAKEN IN THE QUATRE BORNES DISTRICT, THIS ONE MADE DECEMBER 14 BY THE MAURITIAN SOCIETY OF POLLING AND OPINION (SMSO). THE RESULTS GIVE ALL THREE SEATS TO THE PMSD CANDIDATES, WITH BERENGER RUNNING A CLOSE FOURTH AND FAR AHEAD OF THE REST OF HIS MMM TICKET.

11. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, INDEPENDENT L'EXPRESS RAN ON DECEMBER 17 THE RESULTS OF A POLL MADE BY THE MAURITIAN INSTITUTE OF OPINION OF A POLL MADE BY THE MAURITIAN INSTITUTE OF OPINION POLLING (IMSO) WHICH INDICATES AN EXTREMELY CLOSE RECE IN DISTRICT NO. 18 (QUATRE BORNES - BELLE ROSE) WHICH ATTRACS INTEREST BECAUSE OF BERENGER'S CANDIDACY. THE POLL-TAKERS, WHO DID A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL JOB, WISELY WARN THAT THE RESULTS ARE VALID ONLY FOR THE TIME WHEN IT WAS TAKEN (LAST WEEKEND) AND SHOULD NOT BE "EXTRAPOLATED" TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT

THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. INTERESTINGLY, NEARLY 30 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS SPLIT THEIR TICKETS, WHICH IS CONSIDERED HIGHLY UNUSUAL IN MAURITIUS. SEVEN CANDIDATES (3 PMSD, 3 IP AND BERENGER) FINISHED SO CLOSE TOGETHER THAT ANY THREE OF THEM COULD WIN. THE RESULTS BY PARTY WERE: PMSD 26 PERCENT, IP 25 PERCENT, MMM 21 PERCENT, UDM 10 PERCENT, OTHERS AND UNDECIDED 18 PERCENT. BUT BERENGER RAN FAR AHEAD OF THE MMM TICKET, WITH 26 PERCENT OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOTE, AND FINISHED SECOND OVERALL, MEANING HE HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING ONE OF THE THREE SEATS.

12. IN ITS FINAL DAYS AS THE HEAT OF THE CAMPAIGN IS REACHING HIGH LEVELS, RAMGOOLAM WAS PROMPTED TO ISSUE A DECLARATION CALLING ON POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS TO ASSURE THAT ORDER AND DISCIPLINE ARE MAINTAINING BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE ELECTIONS. HE SAID THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR FOLLOWERS. THE WHOLE WORLD CONSIDERS MAURITIUS A FREE, MULTIRACIAL AND DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY AND MAURITIANS SHOULD LIVE UP TO THIS, THE P.M. DECLARED. KEELEY

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